

# Jewish press launched locally

ELAINE KAHN

**A** Teaneck couple have launched their publishing house with a book they hope will become an indispensable goad to lively Torah talk around the Shabbat table.

"Torah & Company: The weekly portion of Torah, accompanied by generous helpings of Mishnah and Gemara, served up with discussion questions to spice up your Sabbath table," by Judith Z. Abrams, is the first product of Larry and Eve Yudelson's Ben Yehuda Press. The company name is based both on Larry Yudelson's childhood fascination with Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who revived Hebrew as a modern language, and on his own surname, he said in an interview.

Yudelson, an Atlanta native who moved to the Midwest with his parents in infancy, said that, for the moment anyhow, he and his wife, a former editor at Random House, are working with books that excite them rather than picking a target audience and finding books to fit. Their impetus in founding the company is that of "reclaiming and bringing to light [subjects] that are falling between the cracks."

Yudelson said he became aware of Abrams' passion for teaching Talmud about 10 years ago when, as founding editor of the Jewish Communications Network website, he was looking to set up a JCN parshat hashavua section. Abrams, a Reform rabbi, was already an established Talmud teacher, in real time and online.

"She has an incredible enthusiasm for teaching," Yudelson said. "This is what she lives for."

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The book arrives just in time for Simchat Torah, he said, which is a special holiday for Abrams. In 1979, a Simchat Torah celebration in the then-Soviet Union turned her toward a life as a rabbi, teacher, and author; at the time, she was a college student majoring in Russian and spending a semester in Leningrad.

Despite the official government ban on religious practice, the Great Synagogue was packed, and Abrams "experienced the amazing crowds gathered before the synagogue, daring to reveal and revel in their Judaism on this one day each year," according to Yudelson.

"Humbled by this display of courage, Abrams meditated on her own religious feelings and considered that perhaps she had been ignoring something valuable in her upbringing. Curiosity aroused, she determined to find out what about her religion was worthy of such a risky public stand."

Abrams' writing includes three volumes of Talmud for Beginners and an online Talmud study program at [www.maqom.com](http://www.maqom.com) "Torah and Company," which is geared to teenagers and adults, not children, is her 18th book.

Yudelson said his company, based in his home and using print-on-demand technology, has two more books in the immediate pipeline: a novel by Nicolette Maleckar, called "The Lilac Tree," and a nonfiction book with the working title "The Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Companion to the Book of Samuel."

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